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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

DENY

Research Memorandum
RSB-137, August 3, 1962

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TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman

Hilsman
Pager

SUBJECT: Possibility of a Soviet Initiative on Berlin in the UN

CONCLUSIONS

In his last conversation with Ambassador Thompson (July 26) Khrushchev remarked that the Soviet Union was considering bringing up the Berlin problem at the UN. Khrushchev's statement raises the question of how likely such a move may be and for what purpose it might be undertaken.

While no firm prediction of a Soviet initiative can be made at this time, our analysis of the factors bearing upon the Soviet decision indicates that a Soviet move in the UN on the Berlin issue is more likely this year than previously.

Soviet Objectives

In proposing UN action on Berlin the Soviets could take several different tactics depending on their objective.

One possibility is that the Soviets intend to do no more than talk about a UN move, hoping to use the threat of potential embarrassment as a device for putting additional pressure on the West to be more forthcoming in negotiation.

If the Soviets decide to go ahead with their plan for a separate peace treaty, they may wish to use the UN as an impediment to possible Western reactions. At some point in the process of preparing, signing and implementing a separate peace treaty Moscow might — as Khrushchev indicated — bring before the UN General Assembly the charge that the West was threatening war in response to the Soviet action. The Soviets probably calculate that if the issue is presented in terms of a Western threat to the peace, the UN may well adopt a seeming "compromise" resolution calling inter alia, for the non-use of force in Berlin which would inhibit Western reactions more than Soviet actions. The Soviets would presumably hope to time such a move late enough

1. The Soviets would almost certainly use registration with the UN as a minor device to give the peace treaty an aura of legitimacy.

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to avoid having the signing of the peace treaty become a topic of debate and the consequent risk that the General Assembly might call upon the bloc not to go ahead with it, but early enough to pre-empt a possible Western initiative calling Soviet actions a threat to the peace. Clearly, these desiderata could come into conflict and the Soviets might find their hand forced by events.

A Soviet demarche to the UN need not be limited to the issue of a Western threat to the peace. While Moscow is likely to be certain that the UN would not rubber stamp the Soviet position on Berlin and Germany; it may hope to gain the support of a majority of UN members for its position on the continued presence of Western troops.

First, Moscow may hope to damage the Western position that this is not a negotiable question, and hope to either wring concessions from the West or score a propaganda victory which would help to justify bloc signature of a separate peace treaty. The Soviets will presumably point to the record of the proposal advanced by Khrushchev privately to Salinger and publicly in his July 10 speech (stationing troops of two small NATO and two small Warsaw Pact countries as UN police forces in West Berlin for a period of 3 to 5 years) or of the variant proposed by Dobrynin on July 12 (UN police forces made up of half US, UK and French Troops and half of troops of small NATO, small Warsaw Pact and neutral countries) as evidence of their effort to solve the problem and demand that the West meet it half way by advancing its own proposals. The Soviets could hope to take advantage of seeming American intransigence by contrasting it with US advocacy of UN forces in the Gaza Strip, the Congo and Rwanda Burundi, perhaps adding an anti-colonialism twist by suggesting that in the American eyes UN peace-keeping is suited to former colonies but not to Europe.

Second, if the Soviets conclude that they cannot secure an early change in the actual presence of Western troops in Berlin, they might attempt to secure a nominal change which would pave the way for other changes in the future. To cite the most radical, the Soviets might hope to secure UN members' acceptance of a scheme which, while involving no physical action with respect to Western presence or access, would rename the Western troops UN troops. Moscow would thus in effect call upon the UN to exercise responsibilities in West Berlin, and would hope that if the new situation were accepted, the way would be clear for later UN action to reduce or withdraw entirely "its" forces in West Berlin.

1. Though not necessarily the two-thirds required to pass a resolution.

Pro and Con

This is not of course the first time that the Soviets appear to have been considering a demarche to the UN on the Berlin issue. There were rumors of such a move last year, and the then Soviet Ambassador to the US, Menshikov, on September 11, 1961 indicated in a private conversation with an American businessman that the Soviet Union might turn the entire Berlin problem over to the UN.

The Soviets presumably have had two reasons for not taking the initiative in raising the Berlin problem in the UN. First, the USSR could not expect the General Assembly, much less the Security Council to adopt a resolution endorsing the Soviet position in toto. Second, the Soviets could not be certain that once the issue was broached, they could control the debate and prevent the adoption of a resolution which would enjoin them not to go ahead with their planned peace treaty. (We have considered, but are inclined to reject the hypothesis that the Soviets may now seek just such a resolution as a device to avoid taking the risks involved in a separate peace treaty. We believe that if the Soviets decide not to sign a peace treaty, they would prefer to avoid giving the impression that this decision was forced upon them and that they no longer had the ability to manipulate the Berlin crisis. Moscow would prefer the pose of forbearance to the appearance of having its vital interests disposed of by the UN.)

While these considerations are still present, the balance now may be tipping in favor of a Soviet initiative precisely at a time when the Soviets appear to be giving serious consideration to the possibility of an early peace treaty. If Moscow cannot expect the UN to endorse its position, it can hope that the General Assembly will, if given an opportunity, seriously undermine the Western position. Given the present composition of the Assembly, Moscow probably believes that it will tend to regard Western rights in Berlin as a secondary consideration in reaching a compromise resolution aimed at keeping the peace. At the same time the Soviet Union may now feel confident that it can muster the necessary blocking third to prevent the adoption of an unpalatable resolution.

The Soviet Union may believe that the recent signature of the Laos agreement may create a climate of opinion at the forthcoming General Assembly which would be receptive to their argument that Laos offers a model for a Berlin solution and specifically for the advantages of neutralizing West Berlin.

From the point of view of UN policy (clearly a secondary consideration from the Soviet standpoint) a dramatic move on a fresh issue such as Berlin might be welcome at this time to counter the setback suffered by the Soviets in the ICJ decision on UN financing and to share the stage with the perennial disarmament issue on which the Soviets have not made a particularly successful showing in Geneva.

Possibility of a Khrushchev Visit to the UN General Assembly

The annual round of rumors that Khrushchev may be planning to attend the UN General Assembly this year opened with a story to that effect which was circulating among newsmen covering the foreign ministers' meeting in Geneva last month. b-1
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However, Khrushchev's conversation with Ambassador Thompson in which he indicated that he personally is engaged in the planning for a possible Soviet initiative on Berlin in the UN suggests that he may well be considering presenting a new Soviet proposal in person. If there is to be a major Soviet initiative on Berlin, it would be logical to suppose that Khrushchev might prefer to make it himself. He might also desire to come to the US for the purpose in order to create an occasion for a meeting with the President which Khrushchev would utilize to ascertain first-hand the President's reaction to the Soviet initiative.

Other Forum

Khrushchev's vague reference in his conversation with Thompson to some sort of commission of jurists suggests that the Soviet Union may attempt to achieve some of its goals by using other, less authoritative but more easily manipulable forums than the UN. A second Bandung conference -- for which initial plans are now being made -- might offer a suitable forum. Moscow might even use a communist-front forum for the purpose, though, as the experience of the last Moscow Disarmament Congress suggests, the lack of authority lessens the usefulness of such a forum.

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